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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, April 25, 1934.

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Hello Folks: Real spring weather seems to have spread its mantle over Washington within the past three or four days, and folks around here are hustling to get their gardens planted. Today, I want to talk with you folks who live on farms, and those of you who have plenty of land on which to grow a garden. I realize that many of you are garden champions in your own neighborhoods, and what I have to say may not be new to you. In fact gardening is such an old art that there's really very little that is new. You folks who live on southern plantations and farms have had your gardens planted for some time, in fact, most of you are using vegetables from your gardens. Some of you northern gardeners, however, are probably still looking through the seed catalogs and ordering seeds. In many sections, including the region around Washington, the plowing and planting of gardens has been greatly delayed on account of frequent rains, but now conditions are better and everybody is getting busy.

I think most of the Farm and Home Hour audience already know my views in this matter of having a good garden on every farm, especially during these times when we haven't any too much ready money with which to buy vegetables. By a good garden, I mean one that will supply practically all of the fresh vegetables we need during the summer, and a surplus to can and store for the off seasons. You folks in the South have the advantage over us northerners for with your long season you can make your gardens feed you every month in the year.-- Now, I realize that to have a good garden means a lot of work - hard work at that - but the returns are so big as compared with field crops that we simply can't afford to neglect our gardens.

On the old Ohio farm where I was reared, we followed the practice of spading up small beds in one corner of the garden for planting our early lettuce and onions. We did this very early before the rest of the garden was in condition to plow. About the same time we usually made a small hotbed with a couple of old window sash over it, and planted seeds of early cabbage and tomatoes. Our garden faced the southeast, was well drained, and usually could be plowed quite early. As soon as the soil was in condition to work, my father would take a day, or part of a day, from his field work and he plowed the garden with a double team and a turning plow, and I'm here to tell you he did a real job of plowing. Then followed a complete harrowing and pulverizing of the soil. Before the "garden" day was over we usually planted our early potatoes, peas, radishes, beets, and some more onions. A week or so later we planted carrots, beans, sweet corn, set out cabbage plants, and made a second planting of peas. The planting of the tomatoes, Lima beans, and other tender crops came a little later, but not a week went by during the early part of the season but something was planted in that garden,--and, what a garden it was.

The soil was a clay loam, but as rich and mellow as barnyard fertilizer would make it. The soil was deep and full of organic matter so that our crops seldom suffered from drought. Originally this soil was quite hard and lumpy,

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but the frequent applications of compost had done the work and changed its character. North, South, East or West, it always pays to get our garden soils in the best possible condition.

Another important point is - what crops shall we grow in our farm gardens? That depends very largely upon what we like, but if we are to have a balanced diet, we want quite a variety. First, we want salads and greens and plenty of them. Then we want potatoes, and, if we live in the South or central sections, we want sweetpotatoes. We want the root crops such as radishes, beets, carrots and turnips. We want the substantial and nourishing vegetables like snap beans, Lima beans and peas of various kinds. We want plenty of tomatoes for summer use and for canning, also cabbage, the real green kind that is full of vitamins, and then a supply of the more solid varieties for storage and for sauerkraut. It makes me hungry to think of all of these good things.

Just a word about the lay-out and the management of the garden. For horse-cultivation, the rows should be fairly wide, straight and rather long to avoid frequent turning. The direction that the rows are run doesn't seem to make much difference so long as the taller crops like corn and pole beans do not shade the smaller crops. If your garden is located on a hillside, by all means run the rows across the slope so as to control washing. If you live in the irrigated districts, you will want to lay your garden out to the best advantage from the standpoint of applying the water. You people in the dry-land areas will need to make the rows of certain crops extra wide so as to provide extra soil space in which the plants can seek moisture.

If your farm garden is small, that is one-half acre or less, I'd advise having a truck patch somewhere on the farm where you can grow potatoes, sweet-potatoes, sweet corn, squashes, melons, and a lot of the crops that really take too much space for the regular garden. I've found that the secret of having a good garden is first, well prepared, good soil, then, working the garden, at least, once a week so as to control the weeds, and at the same time keeping the surface loose and the crops growing. Another point, if you want to get the most from your garden, you must follow one planting with another the whole season through. Bare ground never yields anything so let's get our farm gardens going and keep them going until Jack Frost calls a halt.